SACRED JOURNEY

THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

Winter 2013
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FINAL ISSUE

SACRED JOURNEY

THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

Fellowship In Prayer

encourages and supports
a spiritual orientation to life,

promotes the practice
of prayer, meditation,
and service to others,

and helps bring about
a deeper spirit of unity
among humankind.

SACRED JOURNEY

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Submissions
We welcome submissions of articles on prayer, meditation, spiritual experience and practice, religious faith or similar topics, as well as prayers and poetry. We look for writing that expresses an individual's personal experience while also conveying a deeper message of universal appeal. Writing must be accessible to people of all traditions. Please include a brief biography and full contact information: name, address, phone numbers and email. Articles should not exceed 1500 words and should be submitted to the editor by email: submissions@sacredjourney.org. If necessary, they may be mailed.

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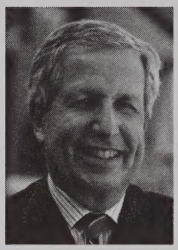
To Touch the Face of God

DAVID NEWTON



Andrew Harvey's interview in this quarter's edition of *Sacred Journey* is a fascinating call to arms. He challenges his reader to "reconcile the two noble fires in the human soul—the fire of the mystic's passion to G-d and the fire of the activist's passion to justice." He further observes that:

> . . . if you only have the consciousness of the mystic without the passion of the activist, you go on believing that you are living an authentic mystical life when you are actually doing nothing to help the planet. If, however, you only have the passion-driven consciousness of the activist without the mystical depth, you are going to reproduce the problems that you are trying to solve. So without spiritual practice being the core of our lives, we are never going to find the subtle balance and marriage of the energies of the passion for G-d and the passion for justice.

This eloquent definition echoes another more ancient imperative, a phrase familiar to many Jews: "tikkun olam b'malchut shaddai," to "repair the world in G-d's Kingdom." Most Jews refer to the shortened version of the phrase "to fix the world," yet G-d is also a necessary part of the concept. Fixing the world (tikkun olam) without G-d (b'malchut shaddai) is impossible.

The prophet Isaiah (Ch. 58) however takes this idea a step further asking what the point is of ritual fasting and lamenting, beating on your chest and prostrating yourselves when

injustices in our society persist.

> No, this is the fast I desire, Isaiah says:
> . . . . It is to share your bread with the hungry,
> And to take the wretched poor into your home;
> When you see the naked, to clothe him,
> And not to ignore your own kin.
> Then shall your light burst through like the dawn
> And your healing spring up quickly.

In spite of appearances, Isaiah is not prophesying against religious practice. Rather, he is suggesting religion cannot be practiced in a vacuum. Religion without social justice does not endure. But social justice without religion, according to Andrew Harvey, will also not endure.

So in this chicken and egg dilemma, which comes first? Man's relationship with G-d, or man's relationship and responsibility to his fellow man? Given what you are about to read I will allow you, the reader, to make up your own mind; whatever your decision, I am sure it will be correct.

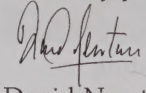
I would like to dedicate this issue of *Sacred Journey* to those who do so much to enhance the lives of others: who feed the hungry and clothe the naked; who shelter the homeless and care for the sick, the physically and mentally challenged, the elderly and the infirm; those who represent the rights of prisoners and the persecuted and who advocate for the voiceless; indeed, this issue is dedicated to all those who help ease suffering, those righteous ones amongst us whose light bursts like the dawn and whose countenances reflect the face of our Creator.

This will be our final printed edition of *Sacred Journey* The board of directors of Fellowship In Prayer has not been able to satisfactorily justify the cost of the journal given a shrinking circulation. While we realize that many loyal readers will wish our decision were otherwise, it is my sincerest hope that we will eventually be able to resurrect the journal potentially

in an online format. In the meantime, I would like to thank the dedicated editorial staff of *Sacred Journey* who have contributed both hard work and great love to producing this journal; and finally I would like to thank, you, our readers for your loyalty and support, we hope that *Sacred Journey* has contributed to and enhanced the quality of your lives.

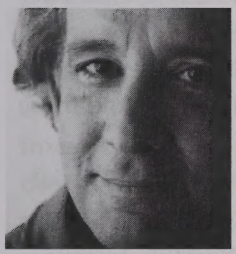
Please feel free to write to me at David Newton, Fellowship In Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542 or dnewton@fellowshipinprayer.org. SJ

Sincerely yours,



David Newton

An Interview with Andrew Harvey



Andrey Harvey is an author, religious scholar and teacher of mystic traditions, known primarily for his nonfiction books on spiritual and mystical themes. For over thirty years, Andrew has traveled widely living in India, England, France, and the United States. He spent that time studying, teaching at university level and in seminars and workshops which include the teachings of Rumi, yoga and practices that lead to a deeper spiritual awareness. A prolific writer, Andrew has authored and coauthored over thirty books.

Andrew Harvey fully believes the words by that great 12th century Christian saint and sacred activist of her time, Hildegard of Bingen, when she wrote, "Humanity, full of creative possibilities, is God's work. Humanity is called upon to assist God. Humanity is called to co-create with God." which challenges us all, whatever our religious or spiritual belief, to do three linked things: uncover our own divine nature through prayer and meditation; to attune our hearts and will to the will of God for the transformation of the earth; and to devote and pour out all our God-given life energies in creativity, service and justice-making so that divine reality can be increasingly embodied in the world.

In 2005, in the historic Santuario de Guadalupe in Santa Fe, New Mexico, Andrew Harvey delivered his own vision of the contemporary crisis now confronting us in today's worlds and its potential solution in what he has termed "Sacred Activism." We are honored to share his vision with you now:

Fellowship In Prayer: When did your sacred journey begin?

Andrew Harvey: I was born in India and to be born in India is to be born into a sacred world and culture. From the moment I was born there were various religious influences in my life. My parents were devoted and practicing Protestant Christians. Yet, my nannies were Catholic and our driver and cook were Muslim! As I was growing up, the influence of family, staff and caretakers impacted me greatly. I experienced life through these many paths, literally.

Then in my teens I became aware of the nature of imperialism and my family's involvement in it. I became a Marxist and really saw the world in terms of economic depression. I gave up what had been a very fervent faith in Jesus and became a political radical. Then at twenty-one I was elected to a fellowship at Oxford College which is the highest academic honor in England. On the one hand I was delighted to be a Fellow of such a prestigious college and on the other hand I was increasingly depressed by meeting the people who control our culture, seeing the sterility and helpless vanity of intellectuals. I felt completely irrelevant and miserable. I was disillusioned.

By twenty-five I was really hollowed out by my experiences of the banality of academia. I was in despair of what I saw as the increasing destructiveness of Western civilization and had no idea what direction my life should take.

I returned to India and it was then that I had several very powerful mystical experiences. They shook my whole being and gave me a vision of a completely different reality. One that I had never encountered, one that the Western philosophers and artists I had admired didn't really know much about. So I realized that the rest of my life would be in pursuit of this new mystical reality.

Would you describe one of your mystical experiences?

The most powerful of the mystical experiences happened when I had been at dinner in the quiet seaside town of Mahabalipuram which I love. After dinner I was walking by the sea, my head split open like a coconut from this overwhelming vision. It filled my body and I saw the whole universe—the sand, the boats, the sea itself, all radiating with divine white light—the white light of divine consciousness. I heard a sound—it was the sound of OM. As the sea crashed upon the shore it was with this great sound and I noticed it was also radiating from every inanimate object—from stones; from wood; from trees and I understood, beyond thought, that the entire universe is actually chanting OM at all moments. It is the core sound of creation. It was a very immense experience.

When I went back to my room which overlooked the sea, I opened the *Upanishads* and I read one of the quotations which went something like, ". . . when you are ready you will hear the sounds of OM, the sound of the fourth consciousness, the sound of the self . . . " I closed the book quickly as it was scary. I understood that I had been initiated and that was the beginning of a wholly new way of life.

And from that experience you began your mystical journey?

Oh no, my God, it was a huge convulsion. Can you imagine a member of the intellectual elite becoming a mystic? It was a convulsion, a very great crisis because I actually had to give up my whole world and the whole idea of academia. To have such a mystical breakthrough in a relatively conservative family was extremely hard. I was detached from my family anyway and this detached me even further. Now I had no family to return to and expect support and no world of which I was familiar. But, I had my passion for God and that took me into a series of very profound adventures.

I went to Ladakh where I met a great Buddhist monk.

I became initiated into Buddhism in the monasteries of the Himalayas. From there I went to live in Paris and met a very exciting and extraordinary woman who translated Rumi. I met a young Indian teacher and became her devotée and a devotée of the divine mother in her. I continued to read and pray and meditate—it was a very intense period. I was now an American living in Paris. I was reading a great deal and spending authentic time with my Hindu teacher.

At thirty-six, while still in Paris, I had an awakening experience where I saw the whole universe vanish in divine light and reappear radiating that divine light. I knew that one stage of my journey was over—the stage to the understanding of the divine nature of reality—and another was beginning. This next stage was joining the wisdom and ecstasy; the bliss and power; the radiance and law of the light; along with the heart, body and soul—to rework these into transformative action. That has been the path that I have been on since—trying to marry the transcendent and the immanent; the feminine and the masculine, the soul, heart and mind.

At what point on your journey did you decide to write about your experience and why?

I've been a writer since my late teens and a passionate poet. I've written several books of poetry and wrote three novels in my thirties which were published. I've always wanted to communicate something that could truly help people. It was only when I was able to explore the mystical realms that I found the subject that was going to transform my life.

In what way?

Many human beings are clearly on a self-destructive path. This comes from our tragic loss of connection with the sacred and with our own true divine nature. But those of us who see

the crisis from a mystical perspective, see that what the whole of humanity is now going through is what mystics have gone through in the past as a global dark night—a global shattering of the illusions and agendas of the false self. Just as the dark night in an individual mystic's life is not the end of a journey, it is rather the beginning of a wholly new kind of awakening. You see a mystical dark night shattering the illusion of fantasies, of agendas, of boundaries, of false ego—as a terrifying process. Yet it doesn't lead to death and destruction but the birth of an entirely new level of divine consciousness—the birth of true divine consciousness.

Having lived through it myself and having become a student of evolutionary philosophers like Bede Griffiths and Sri Aurobindo, what I see now is the world going through a dark night—a global dark night, which I believe is designed to renew, at the most radical level, our commitment to divine truth, to divine consciousness and divinely inspired action—what I call Sacred Activism. This is what we all need to see clearly if we're going to have a chance of surviving. Not only just see it, but put it into sacred action.

Would you describe Sacred Activism for our readers?

Sacred Activism is a transforming force of compassion–in–action. It is made up of the two noblest fires in the human soul—the fire of the mystic's passion to God and the fire of the activist's passion to justice. When these two fires have been kept apart both have failed. Sacred Activism is to have a purely transcendental vision of the mystical path—to leave the world behind. To be addicted to doing without being grounded in spiritual wisdom is to perpetuate the two instances creating the crisis in the first place. If, however, you do succeed in marrying the deepest spiritual wisdom to the most radical action, what you become is a midwife of the third fire which is created by the fusion of the two noble fires. This third fire is the evolutionary

love fire of the Godhead. It is the fire of being— of the creative passion of compassionate force. It is fueled by the fire and charged by the fire and inspired by the fire.

Your book, *The Hope*, is a guide to Sacred Activism. How is Sacred Activism uniquely equipped to give the world healing and transformation?

I believe Sacred Activism is the one force that can truly help us because it brings together two enormous energies of transformative intensity—soul energy and the energy of consciousness on behalf of justice are the two most passionate energies in the human heart and soul. They are, together, what is engendered in the person who experiences that fusion as a tremendous passion and compassion for the whole of reality.

There's a deeper reason that sacred activism is a transforming force. It is what makes it possible for human beings to experience the full passion, energy and intensity of the love force that is creating everything—the evolutionary love force. That evolutionary love force, the *Shakti*, the fire which the void emanates as its creative energy, that force is in itself a fusion of the two fires. If you fuse together the passion to God and the passion to justice within yourself, you participate in the nuclear fusion of the energies of the evolutionary impulsive God-self and you become the creative instrument of radical passion of the Godhead and the transfiguration of human history.

Can you tell us something of Sacred Leadership?

Sacred leadership depends upon the authentic realization of the divine. This realization—the understanding that you are nothing because you are playing in the same world as a dying universe—exists only by divine grace. On the other hand, you are, through divine grace, part of the answer to divine consciousness that is manifesting the universe. A Sacred

Leader is someone who knows this about himself or herself. It's both radical humility and plain pride. Another attribute of a Sacred Leader is someone who understands the terrifying dangers of the world we live in right now and understands too, the evolutionary possibilities of this danger—yet is prepared to spend their whole life to find answers in the service of this vision, in whatever way they are called to, with whatever gifts and resources they have.

You have coined the term "Sacred Warrior." What does this mean to you?

Oh, I don't think I coined it. Sacred warrior has been known for many, many millennia. A sacred warrior is someone who is looking within to give birth to the Divine. Sacred warriorship is about committing oneself to the suffering, ordeals and difficulties; allowing inner transformation and being brave enough to go through them out of love. Then your soul emerges as someone who is prepared to speak truth to power and to live the radical alternative life which can help people come out of the vast *Coca Coma*—a state of anxiety and depression—that is trying to destroy everything.

Do you feel you live a radical life?

I think so!

Why have you chosen to use language relating to war to convey this concept?

The spiritual life has very many things that relate to leadership. You have to be brave, you have to be very strong, and sometimes you have to work to accept very extreme suffering. You have to be able to ruthlessly struggle with your own shadow. All of these things are warrior virtues so I think it's

very important to have that sense of the enormity of courage that you need; the resolute discipline to keep in the stream of transformation. All of the great mystical teachers have given some fundamental teaching about warriorship, crucial to the kind of authenticity and courage that is required for true transformation; not only inwardly, but outwardly in the world. Jesus again and again speaks of himself not only in tender terms but in fierce terms, too. He calls himself a sword, to divide people in the family from each other; this is very fierce language but it's the language of the intensity of the truth that demands sacrifices, honesty and naked commitment. Prophet Muhammad spoke of jihad but his deepest eloquence was about the warriorship—that you need to fight the inner jihad—jihad against yourself, the struggle against one's own darkness, selfishness, stupidity, ignorance and greed.

How do you reconcile the difference between Eastern and Western mysticism?

Both Eastern and Western mysticism recognize the essential nature of human beings as divine. That's the divine consciousness as original blessing. Eastern mysticism tends toward a very transcendental understanding of the nature of reality that has preserved the vision of divine identity. Western mysticism has tended to be more political and economic in its emphasis but it's lost the grandeur of divine consciousness. What is needed is a marriage of the best of the two—a marriage of the highest understanding of divine identity that the east can bring us with the most passionate emphasis on transformative social, economic and political change that the tradition of the prophets, Jesus and the true Christ consciousness.

What do you see as the value of incorporating spiritual practice into our lives?

Well, how on earth do you expect to understand that you are in a sacred universe, that you have divine consciousness and that you are participating in a dance of divine reality if you're not constantly praying, meditating, polishing your heart and purifying your intention so that you can receive more and more of this amazing knowledge? It isn't intellectual knowledge; it's a knowledge that can only be attained through the most intense sacred practice and the most intense commitment to loving God and loving others. Sacred practice is absolutely essential to the great transformation to which we have been called. Without sacred practice, nobody could be a sacred activist because what sacred activism is, is a fusion of the deep wisdom of the mystic with the passionate, pure conscious-driven action of the activist. If you only have the consciousness of the mystic without the passion of the activist you go on believing you're living an authentic mystical life—when you are actually doing nothing to help the planet. If you only have the passion-driven consciousness of the activist without the mystical depth, you're going to reproduce the problems that you're trying to solve. So, without spiritual practice being the core of our lives, we're never going to find the subtle balance and marriage of the energies of passion for God and passion for justice that are now crucial to our survival.

How does the average busy person incorporate that into their life?

Everybody can put aside twenty minutes in the morning and twenty minutes at night and those twenty minutes in the morning and night can be devoted to meditation. Anyone can have a simple mantra practice. During the day they can be saying the name of God. Everyone can stop once an hour for a minute and just notice their breathing. Everyone can start turning their lives over in short prayers to the Divine, from time

to time during the day to be illumined, sustained and inspired. I am so tired of being asked how this fits into the lives of ordinary people.

My experience is that of the so-called ordinary—those who are living very intensely focused lives and are already doing a lot of this simple, naked turning to God in the core of their lives. Certainly the poor in India do this; I've lived with Mexican people for whom this is natural. Once you bring the sacred naturally into your life and start simple humble practices you become very, very awakened by the beauty of what you're doing and it takes on a life of its own; it's very difficult in a culture like this which is so de-secularized, but if you do, you'll find that the rewards are extraordinary.

Thank you, Andrew, for sharing your enlightenment with us.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to help mobilize people into action. SJ

Ten Things You Can Do Right Now

ANDREW HARVEY

Let me offer you ten things you can do right now, or within the next twenty-four hours, to start to align yourself with the power and hope of Sacred Activism. The first six will invite you into deep nourishing connection with your spirit; the last four will help you express in action, the compassion and joy this connection awakens in you.

1. Write down one thing that has made you feel grateful to be alive today. It could be something as simple as the taste of the bagel you had for breakfast or the sight of squirrels gamboling in the snow in the park. Get a small notebook and make the commitment to continue writing down one thing every day that lights you up with joy. At the end of the month, sit down and read the list out loud, slowly, to yourself. You will discover that it reminds you how blessed you are just by being alive in a world full of ordinary wonders. You will discover, too, that it awakens in you a passion for life and a hunger to protect and preserve it.

2. Now write down, without thinking too much or editing yourself just "off the top of your heart" ten things you would say are sacred to you. Today my list is: friendship; all you who are reading this; justice; cats; the first roses of summer; all religions; wise elders everywhere who share their wisdom tenderly and tactfully; India; my brave and wild mother; and the voice of Maria Callas, which has guided me for forty years into my own truest passion. What is your list? You will find that just by writing it down you will start to be inspired by your deepest values, beliefs and sources of emboldening joy.

3. Think of someone who has hurt you or betrayed you and make a commitment to work on forgiving him or her. Imagine this person in front of you, surrounded by light, happy and well. Pray for this person to realize his or her life's purpose. Just doing this once with humble sincerity will unveil your innate strength of compassion. You will taste its truth and freedom and the desire that is born from it to see all beings happy.

4. Read a short text from any of the world's spiritual traditions that inspires you with the love-wisdom of the prophets and mystics who know God directly. The one I use daily is from Rumi:

   O Love, O pure deep Love, be here, be now
   Be all; worlds dissolve in your endless stainless radiance
   Frail living leaves burn with you brighter than cold stars
   Make me your servant, your breath, your core.

5. When the text you have chosen starts to light up your spirit, pray a short prayer that aligns you with the pure deep love that is longing to use you as its instrument in the world. Here are four, from different traditions, that I use at odd moments throughout my day:

   Lord, let me live to be truly useful.

   Beloved, make me strong enough to do Your will.

   Divine Mother, fill me with your passion of compassion so I can do your work tirelessly.

   For as long as space exists and sentient beings remain, may I too remain to dispel the misery of the world.

If none of these prayers inspire you or reflect your beliefs, make up your own and say it ten times, with passion, in the core of your heart.

6. Make a real commitment to spiritual practice. If you do not yet have a practice, start now with a simple meditation. Just sit with your back straight and watch your thoughts for three minutes. Allow your mind, however briefly, to fall silent. In that silence is your greatest treasure, one that will unfold its gold in you if you commit to twenty minutes of simple sitting in the morning and again in the evening before you go to bed. Don't believe me; try it. If you find sitting and watching your thoughts boring, try this visualization that I received from a great Tibetan master who told me it could be used anytime, anywhere: "Imagine that love and compassionate action have transformed you into a large, brilliant diamond that radiates diamond-white light. Send that light to all the four directions, praying, with whatever words you choose, that all sentient beings everywhere be happy, well, and protected."

Over time, this meditation will awaken you to your own deepest sacred desire to see all beings living in harmony and true realization, and to your deepest sacred courage to express this desire in action. When you have begun to experience the beauty of this practice, start doing it at different times in your day—anytime, anywhere. You will be amazed at its power to bring you home to your most compassionate self.

7. Strengthened by prayer, practice and inspiration, turn now to your life and the people in it. Everyone, especially in a time like ours, has friends who are grieving, or ill, or looking for a job, or in real financial difficulty. Commit now to ringing one of them up and asking him or her what you could do to make the burden easier. Do this soon and be happy that you can.

8. Make a commitment to skip one meal in the coming twenty-four hours then send a check for the money you

would have spent to a reputable organization dealing with world hunger.

I strongly recommend Buddhist Global Relief (BGR). BGR focuses on providing food aid to the hungry of the third world and supporting projects designed to develop better long-term methods of food production and management; it is run economically and by devoted people. Visit their website www.buddhistglobalrelief.org for further details. Any contribution, even as little as five dollars, will help far more than you can imagine. Never forget that almost two billion people live on less than a dollar a day.

9. The global crisis we are now facing is plunging people everywhere into distress. There are people around you who are suffering. Make a commitment to find out who they are and what they need, and invite six of your friends to make a commitment with you to begin supplying it. In acting like this, you will be helping to activate the heart of your community. In my experience, more people than you may imagine are longing to be of help; take the first step now yourself and be surprised and heartened.

10. Make a commitment today, even if you are having financial difficulties, to tithe between five and ten percent of what you earn to a cause of your choice. I recommend choosing one particular cause that deeply moves you. Over time, tithing will give you a great and healing sense of being useful and the cause you are helping will become more and more precious and personal to you so that you will want, naturally and simply, to do more. I have tithed for several years now to the cause of keeping the white Siberian tigers alive; it gives me happiness to think that because of the little I

can give, two or three of those magnificent and noble creatures might be able to live. Whatever cause really moves you, move to be of help now. Don't wait. There is great suffering all around us, and it is likely to get worse. Responding now will empower you immediately.

And one last suggestion, because eleven is a sacred number—the number of the hexagram Tai in the I Ching, which means "peace" and, in the words of Richard Wilhelm's commentary, "denotes a time in nature when heaven seems to be on earth." Make a commitment to keep some small change in one of your pockets so you can always give something to one of the growing thousands of homeless in our streets. I learned this habit as a child from my grandmother in India, and over the years it has brought me into contact with some extraordinary people. One in particular I would like to celebrate here. Outside a temple in South India, there was a long line of desolate-looking beggars and among them a very old woman, dressed in a ragged and filthy sari, with no shoes. I gave her what I had on me, about a dollar. I watched in amazement as she walked unsteadily over to the nearest food stand, bought a handful of *chapatis,* broke them carefully in two, and shared them with a dog as emaciated as she was.

If we all knew what that penniless old beggar knew, the hundreds of children who have died of starvation while you were reading this would still be alive.

Excerpted from *The Hope: A Guide to Sacred Activism* by Andrew Harvey
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NEVER DOUBT THAT A SMALL GROUP OF THOUGHTFUL,
COMMITTED, CITIZENS CAN CHANGE THE WORLD.
INDEED, IT IS THE ONLY THING THAT EVER HAS.
MARGARET MEAD

The opposite of love is not hate, it is indifference.
The opposite of art is not ugliness, it is indifference.
The opposite of faith is not heresy, it is indifference.
And the opposite of life is not death, it is indifference.
ELI WEISEL

SOUL HAS INFINITE RESOURCES WITH WHICH TO BLESS MANKIND...
MARY BAKER EDDY

The first step toward change is acceptance.
Once you accept yourself, you open the door to change.
WILL GARCIA

THE HAPPY HEART GIVES AWAY THE BEST.
TO KNOW HOW TO RECEIVE IS ALSO A MOST IMPORTANT GIFT,
WHICH CULTIVATES GENEROSITY IN OTHERS
AND KEEPS STRONG THE CYCLE OF LIFE.
DHYANI YWAHOO

DO NOT WAIT FOR LEADERS; DO IT ALONE, PERSON TO PERSON.
MOTHER TERESA

The world is evolving from imperfection to perfection.
It needs all love and sympathy; great tenderness and
watchfulness are required from each of us.

HAZRAT INAYAT KHAN

Compassion is the awareness of a
deep bond between yourself and all creatures.

ECKHART TOLLE

It is love alone that leads to right action.
What brings order in the world
is to love and let love do what it will.

KRISHNAMURTI

TO BECOME WHOLLY COMPASSIONATE
REQUIRES US TO OPEN OUR EYES AND HEARTS,TO BEHOLD
PAIN AND EXPLOITATION OUR CULTURE OBSCURES, TO AROUSE
DEADENED EMOTIONS AND TO RISE ABOVE OUR EGOS.

JOANNE STEPANIAK

THE DIVINE JUSTICE AND WISDOM
CANNOT BE COMPARED TO THE
EVER-CHANGING MAN-MADE LAWS.

SHAID ATHAR

Sandy Hook

MICHAEL NEILL

We are one, after all, you and I.
Together we suffer, together exist
and forever will recreate one another.

~Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

The tragic killings at Sandy Hook Elementary on Friday, December 14, 2012, have the potential to make the world a better place, because they raise important questions into our personal and global consciousness. How we respond to these questions—personally, in our families, and as a global community—will depend almost entirely on how deeply we are willing to look inside ourselves for new answers.

How do we balance our personal safety and freedom with the safety and freedom of the society in which we live? How do we respond when death strikes close to home and when fear and anger fill our minds and hearts? And perhaps most important of all, how do we deal with the full unfettered possibility of life, which will always include the expected and the unexpected, the tragic and the comic, things we want to happen and things we would do everything in our power to prevent if only we could?

While I lay no claim to the "correct" answers, I do believe I can point to where the best answers will come from. Perhaps more significantly, I think I can point to a more important question, one that we each face each and every moment of each and every day:

Which thoughts that come to mind will we act upon, and which thoughts do we let pass through to make space for something new?

I do not know if every parent who heard about these shootings spent time thinking, What if that were my child?, but I did, and my wife did, and every parent I've spoken with

and heard from did. And because the nature of thought is that we feel what we think, we have all been touched by a sense of sadness and loss; by fear for what might have been and what might be yet to come; by compassion for those that did lose their children that day; by a deep gratitude for our own children and a desire to hold them close and never let them go.

If we were victims of our own thinking, we would be doomed to walk around at the mercy of those thoughts, living in fear and confusion and anger and despair. Because we were angry and scared, it would feel like something had to be done to strike back at the apparent source of our fear and anger.

If we thought that source was outside us, we might write angry letters to Congress or on Facebook attempting to ban guns or we might band together with other concerned parents and arm ourselves in the hopes of out-gunning the lone gunmen who could one day take away our own loved ones.

If we were sufficiently lost in the whirlwind of our own thinking, we might even stop seeing the people who disagreed with us as a part of our human family and begin to see them as either "them" or "us"—on the side of good or on the side of evil.

When we forget that even the worst thought imaginable is only real in our imagination, the world can look like a very frightening place. And when our thinking has gotten us to the point where the noise in our head is so loud that we can't even hear ourselves think, we are capable of doing things so horrible that we would never, ever consider them in our saner, calmer moments.

Fortunately, we do not have to become victims of our own thinking. Thought has the power to create any possibility, but it does not have the power to bring any possibility into being. Only we can do that when we speak a thought into being and act it into the world. By themselves, our thoughts are majestically impotent, filled with sound and fury, signifying nothing.

It only takes one moment of quiet to take away a lifetime of noise. One pause in the onslaught of thoughts and their accompanying anger and fear allows our innate wisdom back in, like the sun piercing the clouds in an artistic representation of God. We can have a change of heart in any moment. We can look beyond the noise of thought and feeling and see something new, and in a moment of insight our old ideas are wiped away like writing erased from a chalkboard.

As a society, this is how we will resolve the seeming paradoxes of individual and community safety. As parents, this is how we will learn to cope with wanting to keep our children close and to watch them grow wings and fly free. As individuals, this is how we will learn to live with both the inevitability of death and the infinite possibility of life.

What happened in Sandy Hook did not have to happen, but it did. We cannot go back and prevent it, but we can look forward and prevent something similar from happening again. We won't do it by entrenching ourselves deeper in our current thinking, looking for better and better arguments as to why our solution is right and their solution is wrong. We won't do it by drowning in our feelings of hopelessness and despair, no matter how real and overwhelming those feelings will be while we're in them.

"How could a loving God allow this to happen?" is a question that has plagued those that believe and those that want to believe throughout time. No matter how hard we pray, it seems that we cannot prevent violence through faith alone. For me, I have found my comfort inside the paradox of God in the words of Marianne Williamson:

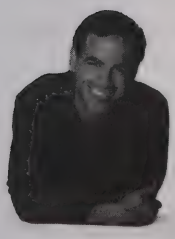
"God heard us. He sent help. He sent you."

The future will change one person at a time and one thought at a time. You can't bring back a child, but you can bring back the hope in one. You can show love to those that have been raised in hate and you can be an oasis of kindness in a desert of cruelty. You can learn more about the nature of

thought and feeling, and the deeper wisdom that guides us when we allow ourselves to keep our heart open even when it feels like it will break into a million pieces.

What actually breaks is never our heart—it is the shell that has formed around it. And when that shell breaks open, our hearts unite with the hearts of others and we learn at another level what it is to love.

Above all, the next time you see a young person who seems lost and confused and is trying to find their way, don't ignore them and don't turn away. Without your light, it will be that much harder for them to find their way back home.



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A New Generation of Hindu Volunteers

JAWEED KALEEM

In a cluttered fifth grade classroom in this New York suburb, Niki Shah has spent the summer attempting an almost impossible task: teaching yoga to seven-year-olds.

Each day at an annual free summer camp the city sponsors for children of mostly low-income families, Shah, a thirty-one-year-old America Corps volunteer, interrupts games of basketball and soccer to gather students in a circle around him for breathing exercises, poses such as "the mountain" (also known as the "downward dog") and silent meditation—difficult tasks for these first-graders with no shortage of energy or conversation.

Shah, a Hindu-American who was born in India and raised in Passaic, considers this his *seva*. The Sanskrit word, commonly used in Hinduism, loosely translates to "selfless service."

"I am Hindu and I was taught yoga in school at a young age in India," said Shah, who recently earned his master's degree from Rutgers University in global affairs. "I thought, how can I use what I know from my faith and experience to impact the community— whatever their faith may be?"

Shah is one of dozens who, this past year, convened in Washington, DC at a national conference at the White House and Georgetown University to talk about a topic of growing concern to a new generation of the nation's 1.2 million Hindu-Americans: How can Hindus, a diverse religious group with members that differ vastly in theological beliefs, unite to impact their communities through service?

The event, the first of its kind, was organized by Hindu-American Seva Charities, a two-year-old non-profit that was born out of a "call to service" that President Barack Obama made in 2009.

The idea of community service may seem intuitive. Christian denominations, for example, have emphasized social service programs in the United States for more than a century. Yet for Hindus, who only began having a sizable population in American cities in the 1960s and 1970s, experts say the community focus has long been on building temples (there are now 1,600 nationwide), developing careers and educating their children.

"There is a gap in the Hindu-American community," said Anju Bhargava, a former member of the President's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships and the founder of Hindu-American Seva Charities. "We're engaged religiously, we're starting to get engaged with civil rights issues, but we're not very engaged in faith-based service," said Bhargava, who by day is a Senior Vice President at Bank of America.

Still nascent in its operation, Bhargava's organization has dispatched several volunteers like Shah to community centers, schools and health fairs around the nation to work with low-income and minority communities. And while almost every member of the organization is Indian and Hindu, the focus is almost exclusively on seva toward non-Hindus.

"In general, I've never really been a religious person, but I call myself Hindu and am proud of it. I was looking for a way to work with other Hindus, to feel like part of that family, but to help people who weren't just like me," said Supriya Prakash, a junior at George Washington University who has spent her summers traveling to health fairs in Latin American communities in New Jersey to teach wellness classes as part of a Hindu-American Seva Charities effort.

Prakash represents the kind of demographic the organization is attempting to reach: US-born or US-raised Hindus who may not frequent temples very often, but still want to feel connected to other Hindus.

"Hindu communities tend to prioritize two types of connections: one is local, usually via the temples, and one is back home to India. But there are not as many connections between temples, or between Hindu organizations themselves, or between them and other organizations in America," said Vasudha Narayana, a religious studies professor at the University of Florida who specializes in the Hinduism diaspora. "But that is what the young generation wants right now. We have lots of young or new Hindus who want to embrace their heritage, but may not want to do it via the temple," Narayana added.

Hindu-American Seva Charities is just one of several non-temple-based Hindu organizations that have formed in recent years, though it is one of the few focused exclusively on community service and interfaith efforts. Another popular organization, the Hindu-American Foundation, has largely focused on civil rights issues and an educational campaign about yoga.

While it's not a political group, one of the advantages Hindu-American Seva Charities has over other Hindu groups is its connections to the Obama administration's faith-based efforts. For its Washington, DC conference, it assembled a broad array of Hindu-American community leaders as well as non-Hindus. They included former Senator Harris Wofford; Shaun Donovan, the US Secretary for Housing and Urban Development; the Rev. Mark Farr, President and CEO of The Faith & Politics Institute; Rabbi David Saperstein of the Union for Reform Judaism's Religious Action Center; and several others from Sikh and Muslim communities.

Calling the effort a "logical step" for the Hindu-American community, Joshua DuBois,

the Pentecostal pastor who is the executive director of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, applauded the organization's efforts in an interview.

"Faith-based organizations are often the groups that are closest to the people. They are going to be the ones who are putting roofs over the heads of the homeless or feeding the hungry or making sure we are helping people prevent foreclosures," said DuBois, who spoke to the organization at the White Hose.

Vineet Chander, a thirty-three-year-old Hindu chaplain at Princeton University who presented at the Washington, DC event, believes getting Hindus involved in community service will also help Americans better understand the religion. "If there is a lack of information about who Hindus are or what they believe, one way of bridging that gap is to be out there in the wider community. 'We have to say **Yes**, we have our roots in India but we are here in America,'" said Chander, who works with about 200 Hindu students at the university on religious, cultural and service-oriented efforts. "We have to engage in America— not despite our faith roots, but actually with our faith front and center."

Jaweed Kaleem is the national religion reporter for *The Huffington Post*. Previously he was the religion reporter for *The Miami Herald*, where he was a member of a breaking news team that was a 2011 Pulitzer Prize finalist for its coverage of the 2010 Haiti earthquake. He has produced radio reports on religion for Miami's WLRN 91.3 FM and PRI's *The World*. This article first appeared on *The Huffington Post* and is used with permission. jaweed.kaleem@huffingtonpost.com

What I Learned About Social Justice from the Higgs Boson

JOSHUA LEVINE GRATER

A famous story in the Talmud (Menachot 29b) recounts the following: Moses once went up on high and saw God embellishing the letters of the Torah with fancy crowns. Moses asked, "What is with the crowns, Holy One?" God responds, "One day, many generations from now, there will be a wise scholar, Akiva is his name, and he will interpret many laws from these very crowns." Moses asks to see this Akiva and, in a moment of Back to the Future-like wizardry, he is transported ahead in time to Akiva's classroom. He is sitting in the back row and as he listens to the lesson, he is astonished. He has absolutely no idea what Akiva is talking about in this lesson! He starts to feel faint and disoriented, until one student raises his hand and asks Akiva the source for a particular point of law he was expounding. Akiva answers, "From Moses at Mt. Sinai!" Moses feels better, for despite the fact that he does not understand Akiva's lesson, he is comforted that it is indeed rooted in his own tradition.

I don't often get to say that I feel like Moses, but I did at one point in the past year. There was a discovery made last summer of epic proportions, one that is going to change, we are told, the face of physics and perhaps our entire understanding of the universe. Known as the Higgs Boson, it is the cornerstone of modern physics, believed to play a key role in imbuing things with mass. It is the last missing part of the Standard Model, a suite of equations that has held sway as the law of the cosmos for the last thirty-five years. It could explain, for example, why the universe is made of matter and not antimatter, or what constitutes the dark matter and dark energy that rule the larger universe. What was discovered at the European Organization

for Nuclear Research or CERN, in Geneva, could constitute a rendezvous with destiny for a generation of physicists who have believed in the boson for half a century without ever seeing it. The finding affirms a grand view of a universe described by simple and elegant and symmetrical laws, but one in which everything interesting, like ourselves, results from flaws or breaks in that symmetry. Mass, energy, light, particles, protons, collisions, equations. To this point, I have no idea what I am talking about and in this regard, I feel completely like Moses! And if you are not one of the many among us who work at Caltech or the Jet Propulsion Laboratory and Center here in Pasadena, maybe you feel like Moses too. But at the end of the article in *The New York Times*, which I was just quoting from to describe Higgs, I got my moment of relief: the Higgs Boson is what some like to call the God Particle. Eureka! Now you are talking my language! While I am struggling to help my kids with 5th grade math, thereby making physics completely beyond me, understanding this discovery as what we might call God, the glue that holds the universe together, the power that makes for both unity and diversity, described by scientists as "the only manifestation of an invisible force field, a cosmic molasses that permeates space and imbues elementary particles with mass," this makes perfect sense. I would have loved to have been in the room at CERN, with all the celebrations and toasts and jubilation and prayed *maariv aravim* or *sh'ma yisrael* with all of them! While science needs to have physical proof, through equations, which I totally respect and admire, I also feel kinship with those that have said they felt this field existed without being able to prove it. To me, that is faith, that is God, that is the glue that holds us together. Call it what you like, use math or science or Hebrew or Greek or English or whatever; like Moses, we can all have that feeling of connection when the pieces are put in place.

In another piece of witty Talmud (Kiddushin 40b), the sages ask, "What is more important: study or action?" In a very Jewish answer, they respond, "Study, because it leads to action." The

God particle, the glue that holds us together, becomes visible when we transform our faith into action. So I ask: Where is the God particle in Syria, as a civil war continues to rage on, with babies slaughtered before our eyes, with the world community sitting on the sidelines? Where is the God particle in Darfur, where that war continues to rise and fall as we struggle to figure out how to help, or in the Congo, that war-ravaged land where the minerals we all use in our cell phones come from? Where is the God particle in our world as the president of Iran—a man who, on a regular basis, threatens to destroy Israel, and is threatening to bring our world to the brink of another massive war—who spoke at the United Nations, as Jews around the globe were fasting and praying? Rabbi David Wolpe preached that the Iranian threat of acquiring the bomb is the single greatest issue facing Jews and the entire world, and he may be right. Where was the God particle when extremists, acting like brutal savages, took the lives of Ambassador Stevens and his staff? And where was the God particle when insidious human beings tricked B-rate actors into making a shabby movie that they then converted into an anti-Islamic piece of propaganda trash? Where is the God particle when one in five American children lives in poverty and hunger, where schools are closing, where food is contaminated, where droughts, floods, fires, storms and melting ice caps threaten our planet and all the creatures who call Earth home? Where was the God particle in that locker room at Penn State? The God particle remains invisible, remains an elusive and unattainable equation that offers us nothing, if we human beings do not bring it to light, living out our destiny as creatures created in the image of that God particle.

And lest you think that I am giving another gloom and doom sermon, one that will leave us feeling weighed down, not lifted up, I want to share some ideas from three books I worked through this summer, two of them given to me by congregants. The first is called *Rational Optimism,* by Matt Ridley, who suggests that the world is actually much better today, and

getting even better, than our ancestors ever imagined it could be. In category after category, for almost four hundred pages, he brings evidence for feeling positive and hopeful. I didn't agree with everything in this book and the author's British wit and sarcasm left me bristling at times. But he said something at the end that moved me. He writes, "It is precisely because there is still far more suffering and scarcity in the world than I or anybody else with a heart could wish that ambitious optimism is morally mandatory"

> The God particle comes to life when we stand up and shine our divine lights into the darkness that permeates our world.
>
> ~Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

Ambitious optimism—that phrase to me sings of the God particle. Whether Ridley would agree, I don't know. But I believe, like Ridley, that we have the capacity to fix the real challenges we face if only we can summon the courage, creativity, the will and ambitious optimism to work together with the right motivations.

The second book was *Bonhoeffer, Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* by Eric Metaxas about Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German Lutheran minister who fought against, and eventually was killed, by the Nazis for being part of a plot to assassinate Hitler. Bonhoeffer, a smart, aristocratic and wealthy man, born into a noble family, twice came to America: first to study with influential theologian Rienhold Niebuhr and then to teach at Union Theological Seminary in New York. It was in America and particularly in Harlem at the Abyssinian Baptist Church, that he learned about segregation and the oppression of African-

Americans. Through listening to fiery sermons from the likes of Adam Clayton Powell, Sr. in Harlem, and Rabbi Stephen Wise at the Free Synagogue, Bonhoeffer came to understand the sufferings of minorities, and the ineptitude of his church to do anything serious about them. It was during this time, early 1930s America, that he is said to have "turned from phraseology to reality." He taught, spoke out, gave thousands of speeches, started a new church, a new seminary and organized against the Third Reich. After coming again to Union in 1939, his conscience ate at him for running from evil. He did the unthinkable when he left the safety of America in late 1939, to return to this native Germany to fight against the Nazis. He is said to have been on the last chartered ship across the Atlantic. I was quite inspired by his notion that God was so good and compassionate, so full of righteousness and justice, that he, Bonhoeffer, couldn't sit back and not try to bring his own Godly energies into the heart of darkness that was engulfing the world, and murdering our people. He was arrested and hung in 1945, just days before the war ended. This man, a friend to the Jewish people and humanity, from a privileged class, was a vivid example of a life centered around one's God particle.

The last book I spent time with this summer was the Torah. I know, that doesn't count, right? Especially for the rabbi. I spent time looking carefully at Chapter 19 of Leviticus—the Holiness Code—where it famously says, *kedoshim ti'hiyu ki kadosh ani adonai eloheichem,* "you shall be holy for I, Adonai your God am holy." Being holy, which gets fleshed out in the later verses of that chapter, as not putting a stumbling block before the blind, not cheating one another, not hating one another in our hearts, not bearing a grudge, not insulting the deaf, and positively, to love our neighbors as our ourselves, reminds me that the God particle lives in the world when we act in ways that activate God's call to us. It is the theology of Rabbi Harold Schulweis, what he terms Predicate Theology, one that teaches if we have a hard time with God, then look for acts

of Godliness in our world. If God could do it without us, we wouldn't have been created. There is a teaching of the Netivot Shalom, the Slominer Rebbe, who says that we all are born with *a sh'lichut elyonah*, "a higher message or purpose," each of us called to bring a certain aspect of holiness into the world in our time, in our place, from our own lived experience. What is yours? What will you be committed to do to bring your own bit of the God particle into the world?

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, who had a similar awakening to social justice just a few decades after Bonhoeffer, taught us that the God particle comes to life when we stand up and shine our divine lights into the darkness that permeates our world. Dr. King taught us that lesson and, like Bonhoeffer, paid for it with his life. The parents of Syrian children who marched in the early days of the war, standing up to the tyranny of oppression taught us that lesson. Israeli and Palestinian parents who have lost children to terror and war, yet still come together for reconciliation and peace, teach us that the God particle lives in us. People who donate bone marrow, organs and blood for others; people who volunteer in the Armed Services to protect our nation; doctors, nurses and therapists who care for the elderly, the sick and disabled; teachers who work hard and creatively to educate; all these folks bring the God particle to life. Gilad Shalit, surviving five years of captivity, released this past year, healing and rebuilding his life to cover the NBA finals last spring and celebrate in the Miami locker room, he brought the God particle to life. The two NFL players, who, against the prevailing culture of their sport, stood up recently and publicly supported marriage equality—they are bringing the God particle to life. Micha Feldman, the amazing savior of Ethiopian Jews who orchestrated the airlifting of thousands of people from Africa to Israel in one, long weekend, and who now dedicates his life to helping these souls become integrated into Israeli society, he is teeming with the God particle. Members of my own community, here in Pasadena, who are tutoring kids at

school, feeding the hungry, fighting for fair housing, safer policing, better business practices and healthier food for us to eat—all of us together are working to bring the God particle to life.

If we—each one of us—don't do our part to take care of our world, if we don't take the necessary risks to speak out, and work against the forces of darkness that do want to destroy our amazing world, then the Higgs Boson, the God particle, religion, prayer and God Herself, Himself, Itself, however you believe or don't believe, all of that will be meaningless. What I hope and pray for, what I seek is how to work more creatively, more compassionately, more profoundly, to help build a world where Muslims, Christians and Jews, as they pray and work together, for peace and reconciliation, as the outreach program does through the Abrahamic Faiths Peacemaking Initiative. We are working to create a program that has the potential to spark a revolution as widespread and as emotionally charged to bring people together rather than tear them apart; a world where the knowledge of a force field of invisible energy, one that ties the entire universe together, inspires us to finally lay down our arms, lay down our hate, lay down our anger, lay down our disappointment, lay down our fear and come together to feed, clothe, heal, protect, share and celebrate as one human family. Let us be inspired to figure out that equation, with all the ambitious optimism we can muster, in the coming year. SJ

Addendum

I want to thank my colleague Rabbi Sharon Brous for suggesting the examples of the Syrian parents, the NFL players and the bone marrow donors, as well as the teaching of the Slominer Rebbe.

Rabbi Joshua Levine Grater is the spiritual leader of Pasadena Jewish Temple & Center. He was ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary. Currently he serves on the board of Jewish World Watch, a synagogue-based consortium that focuses on genocide (primarily in Darfur and Congo); the National Advisory Board of J-Street; and the advisory boards of Just Vision and the Guibord Center. He is co-chair of the interfaith organization Abrahamic Faith Peacemaking Initiative. This article was his original 2012 Yom Kippur sermon.

REPEAT, REPEAT . . .

GAIL DENHAM

Here I am again, a wreck,
  washed out, done,
  finished, lost.
How will I get through this time?
  Hope flees before
  the onslaught. What's
that, God? You understand?

For over 35 years, Gail Denham has been writing prayer, poetry, stories, essays and news articles. Her writing along with her photographs have appeared in numerous publications. Gail leads writing workshops and conferences in the Northwest region. She has produced three poetry chapbooks. Gail loves God, family, and humor.

Thank You

WYNNE HENRY

In the morning
I awaken to my own heartbeat
thankful that I'm not homeless
hungry
hustling on the streets
or begging by the parkway on-ramp for spare change
because my cup truly runs over

I have a roof over my head
and my own blanket that I don't have to share
with an unwelcome stranger
who looks for more than warmth

I have health and strength
and no need for assistance to get up and face the challenges of my day
my chaos has been transformed into peace
by the Spirit of the Most High

I have rivers of living water
flowing through my soul
and the floodgates of goodness and mercy are opened to me daily
my enemies are the stepping-stones to my greatness
and all they can do is watch me rise
mesmerized by the wonders of Your power
they marvel at Your faithfulness
Your favor
and Your love…

—Thank You!

Wynne Henry discovered her fascination with words at a very early age. She earned her BA in Theatre Arts from Cal State University, Dominquez Hills, where the combination of writing and theatrical studies gradually led her down a path where she discovered her true passion—poetry! Wynne continues to write and perform poetry as a healing outlet that inspires others to find their own creative voices. She also enjoys teaching poetry, drama and dance to children, teens and women.

The Nesting Place

ARIE STAAL

My soul, Lord
flits like the shadows
of birds flying through trees
and yet remains
knowing its nest
has been provided
by You.

Arie Staal has enjoyed a long and distinguished teaching career. For over thirty years he taught in the English Department at Eastern Michigan University with additional teaching time at Calvin College, the University of Michigan and the University of Helsinki.

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Knowing Too Much Too Soon

CYNTHIA FRASER GRAVES

In a schoolyard, a child leans on the tired red brick of an old building. She watches the wars for this day begin. It is a September afternoon, warm and bright, though a dark winter is blowing up over her shoulder, spinning blindly in its cage of seasons.

Spiked voices and erratic movement shock the young girl; she retreats into her disguise, winds tightly into a chubby little-girl body, hoping to disappear from the chaos of games in the noontime recess. The air fills with loud shrill cries, cries that mask the accepted discontent of school. Nuns drift among the roving cliques, exclamation marks tensely separating and suppressing unruly activity. Every collective plot known to man is being played out in some corner of the tarred play yard: intimidation, humiliation, theft, physical harm. The air vibrates with fear.

The sun sparks off the banana-flavored all day sucker she holds; the flash draws sharp attention her way. The vigilante group hovering near the girls' entrance fixes its glance on her. "Hey you guys, look at fatso." The circle stops, opens where she is cowering, swings around and comes to her for diversion. She watches them huddle and knows it is her they prepare to assault.

From somewhere inside, a nascent justice wakes. She faces the ugly boys leering her way. She is from people who stood as she stands now when the English banned her forbearers from Canada generations ago. She understands the cruelty they fashion for her and wants to be brave, but her resolve quivers on the knife's edge.

A ring of quiet spreads around her; the other children know something is going down and though many feel sorry for her, they can find

no access to this dangerous scenario that doesn't bode ill for themselves.

In that tiny moment, on the very first energy of what would be their attack, she braces herself, standing as tall as her nine years will allow. The wave comes. Boys with shirts untucked and socks riding innocently around their bony ankles stir the dust and it lands on the toes of her small shoes. She is too fragile for this meanness. Her fear blossoms out of control; she turns to flee.

The jeopardy of leaving the schoolyard, of breaking the nun's rules, is far less menacing than the leering faces laughing at her, calling the whole world of school to watch. She begins to run vaguely aware of a nun shadowing her toward the boundary of the schoolyard, calling after her, "Here, you, girl, now come back here this minute!" Minding this command never enters her mind.

The dangerous sounds disappear behind her as she slips out from under them. Wind whispers a welcome in her ears and she streaks as fast as her feet can carry her child body down the hill from St. Athanasius School to the four corners of the road home. She runs in the road, breaking rules her mother has set down without a thought, only caring about the distance between herself and the dark citadel on the hill.

On the spire of St. John's Church reaching above her head, the saint himself watches as she spins by, running through the angular shadows the church casts, not slowing down. "I've got to get home, I've got to get home . . . " is the prayer that repeats itself with her every footfall. Her throat is dry and sweat has glazed her face. Her breathing comes hard as she flies through the next intersection and onto the leafy tunnel of Hill Street. Usually, her walk here would wind through the gardens and yards of this street, often stopping to stand stock-still in the middle of the lane to listen to the wind speak. Today, her pace pounds her along though

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her labored breathing has locked her lungs up tightly.

Hill Street planes down and around a curve to the bottom of the steep hill. The sudden descent trips her; she pitches forward and lets the road take her down, gasping uncontrollably now and crying with what breath she has left.

The reason for the flight is almost forgotten in the work of running, but blunt fear stands her up and she begins to run again. On her left, a path cuts through a swath of woods and connects to her home at 42 Spruce. She leaps into the woods, stumbling with the onset of dizziness but cannot stop. She prays to the picture of her father in her mind, prays he will be there, her trustworthy father who will be getting ready for his afternoon shift in the mill.

Without seeing, she passes through the yard of the house next door, now littered with broken toys from the summer just past and lurches onto the broken sidewalk that leads to her porch, then to the front door; she reaches for the

handle of the door, pushes it heavily and falls with it as it opens into safety. Rolling and gasping from side to side, her feet kick, heels down and hurting to distract attention from the fire in her lungs. Her father rushes down the long hallway to her calling her name with alarm. At the same time, her brother explodes into the house having been in pursuit of her from the beginning of her escape from the schoolyard.

And now she is being picked up and held. Looking down at the hall carpet, she knows every comforting stain and pattern and she reads safety, she reads home and she lets the tears fall. Breath begins its progress into her lungs in small, territorial victories, deeper and deeper, though the pain of deprivation still rages. Dad and brother bring her to the day bed in the sunroom to rub her back, patting and soothing with soft sounds. Concern lives in their eyes and tone.

The crying that will continue on this child's afternoon is for many things. It is for being so afraid and for the physical pain, a cocoon around her now, growing as her muscles rebound from the pounding demands they have answered. It is for the punishment she will receive when she goes back to school, as she will have to; punishment from both, the nuns and their terrible dark room and belts and punishment from the laughing classmates, payment for her bravery. But more, she cries for what she has seen in the eyes of the boys as they advanced on her. In some vague wise way, she knows she will see this hatred and fear again in many disguises. It is this sorrow that goes deepest. SJ

Cynthia Fraser Graves taught English for three decades before retiring in 2000 to write full-time. Her books include *Eyes Like Jewels*, a collection of poems, and her memoir *Never Count Crow: Love and Loss in Kennebunk, Maine.* Her next novel is in the final stages, *Dusk on Route One.*

Grounding Ourselves in Sacred Practice

DIANE BERKE

True understanding in a person has two attributes:
awareness and action . . . .
Who can enjoy enlightenment and remain indifferent
to suffering in the world?
This is not in keeping with the Way.
Only those who increase their service along with their
understanding can be called men and women of Tao.

~Lao Tzu, Hua Hu Ching

Through serendipity, I met Andrew Harvey on Easter Sunday 2005. A few days later, over a getting-acquainted lunch, I asked Andrew what he was focusing on in his teaching and writing. When he answered, "Sacred Activism," I felt my whole being responded with a resounding "Yes!"

For the past twenty-five years, I have been educating dedicated men and women for sacred service to the world as interfaith and interspiritual ministers, spiritual counselors, and leaders. It has long been clear to me that our capacity for true service must be rooted in the depth and integrity of our own spiritual life and practice. And I share Andrew's understanding that for our engagement in the world to be transformative—it must grow out of and express a consciousness of the fundamental interconnectedness and unity of life that deep practice makes possible.

As sacred activists, if we are to cultivate and sustain the peace, passion, energy, strength, courage, compassion, clarity and wisdom necessary to be agents of transformation, we need to ground ourselves in a daily sacred practice. Such practice is not a luxury; it is our lifeblood, the daily nourishment and grounding we need to engage in the work that gives meaning to our lives.

Rather than taking us away from the world and its needs and cries, sacred practice prepares us to serve the world more

powerfully and effectively. In the words of Quaker educator and author Parker Palmer, it is "the work before the work."

In his work, Andrew has identified five kinds of sacred practice that are essential to sustain us as sacred activists: cool practices, warm practices, prayer, body practices, and shadow work. Cool practices are those which help us to be calm, centered, and peaceful even in the midst of storms in our lives and world. The cool practices support us in accessing the peace and perspective of the transcendent, which allow us to engage the world with greater clarity and skillfulness. As we more and more embody a depth of peace, we are increasingly able to extend peace to all those we encounter simply through our own presence. Mindfulness meditation, mantra practice, and centering prayer are all examples of cool practices we may want to explore.

Warm practices are those that keep the heart open and the energy of passionate compassion alive and flowing in us and from us. They enable us to access the joyful energy of Divine Love, to keep us vibrant and passionately alive through times of disappointment, frustration and discouragement that are inevitably part of this work. Warm practices include the fervent practice of gratitude, the Buddhist practice of *tonglen*, the Sufi practice of *zikr*, Christian meditation on the Sacred Heart, Hindu *kirtan*, and the Jewish practice of expanding the circle of the heart.

Together, warm practices and cool practices allow us to stay in balance—to marry, in the words of Rumi, "the power of passion that comes from heartbreak and the peace of serenity that comes from surrender."

In *The Hope*, Andrew points out that there will be times, for every sacred activist, when there is too much anguish, fear, outrage, or despair to be able to meditate or do the warm practices in more than a perfunctory way. At such times, the most powerful practice we can call upon is the practice of prayer. At all times, prayer can support in us the essential quality of humility. As teacher of Tibetan Buddhism, Ed Bastian

writes, ". . . prayer almost always carries with it the recognition that we as individuals who do not have the power to single-handedly control our destinies, to manipulate the circumstances of our lives, or achieve our deepest aspirations. Prayer entails a confidence that there are spiritual realities that can help us forge our paths through life . . ." Prayer practice can take many forms, including praying traditional prayers, spontaneous prayer, praying for others and for the world.

Body practices are the fourth type of sacred practice essential for sacred activists. The spirituality required in our time is an embodied spirituality. Mystical vision recognizes the sacredness of embodiment as the expression of the Divine in and through matter, as Teresa of Avila noted when she wrote that Christ [the Divine] "has no body on earth but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours, yours are the eyes with which he looks with compassion on this world, yours are the feet with which he walks to do good, yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world." Body practices such as yoga, tai chi, body prayer, and taking walks in nature strengthen our bodies to receive and express higher energies and awaken us to sacred immanence not only in ourselves but throughout the whole of creation.

The fifth type of sacred practice, shadow work, has been called Western psychology's great contribution to the spiritual life. Carl Jung wrote, "If you imagine someone who is brave enough to withdraw all his projections, then you get an individual who is conscious of a pretty thick shadow. ... he is now unable to say that they do this or that, they are wrong, and they must be fought against. . . . Such a man knows that whatever is wrong in the world is in himself, and if he only learns to deal with his own shadow he has done something real for the world. He has succeeded in shouldering at least an infinitesimal part of the gigantic, unsolved social problems of our day. These problems are mostly so difficult because they are poisoned by mutual projections. How can anyone see

straight when he does not even see himself and the darkness he unconsciously carries with him into all dealings?"

If as sacred activists we are truly to act in the world with clarity and effectiveness, we must engage in the difficult and, at times, painful work of recognizing and reclaiming the rejected, despised and exiled parts of ourselves that we have denied and projected out onto the world. This is the work Jesus called us to when he told us to first remove the log in our own eye so that we can see clearly how to best remove the speck from our brother's. While the deepest and most difficult shadow work may be best done with the guidance of a skilled counselor, we can begin to explore shadow work on our own through resources like David Richo's book *Shadow Dance* or the 3-2-1 Shadow Process described in the book *Integral Life Practice*.

To begin grounding ourselves in a daily practice, here are a two practical suggestions:

❄ Set aside a specific place and time for your practice.

While many sacred practices are meant to be "portable"—that is, we can do them wherever and whenever we need them—it is helpful to set aside a particular room or corner of a room in your home in which to practice. By establishing a specific place for practice, you will find that place beginning to be infused by the sacred energy of your intention and commitment and by the energy, power, and peace of the Divine. Over time, simply entering that space and preparing to practice will begin to align and open you to that Presence.

In the same way, it is helpful to establish a set time (or times) for your practice. For many people, early morning is an especially powerful time for sacred practice, as we open to the freshness and new possibility that comes with the dawn. Morning practice allows us to move into our day and to greet whatever and whomever we will encounter refreshed, energized, empowered, and fortified with the energies of grace. A second

time of practice, in the early evening or just before falling asleep can be a helpful "bookend" to our morning practice. We can ground again in awareness of the Divine, review the experiences and learnings of the day, release whatever needs to be released; and offer ourselves to the loving care and protection of the Divine as we enter the renewal of sleep and dream.

We can also try to remember that the times we feel most pressured and stressed are the times we need to be most vigilant about our practice. St. Francis de Sales wrote, "Half an hour's meditation each day is essential, except when you are very busy. Then a full hour is needed."

❄ Do your practice without expectations or attachment to having particular experiences.

The purpose of our sacred practice is not to have blissful, amazing, or revelatory experiences during our practice times, although those may occur. The purpose of our practice is to gradually transform us into people who deeply know and trust the grandeur and joy of our true nature; who passionately love God and life and the whole of creation; who naturally extend friendship and compassion to all living beings; who see with clarity and act with wisdom; and who by their very presence offer others the gift of peace. The true fruits of practice show themselves, not necessarily in what we experience during our practice times, but in our daily lives and interactions with others. SJ

Rev. Diane Berke is the Founder and Spiritual Director of One Spirit Learning Alliance and One Spirit Interfaith Seminary in New York City. She is the author of numerous books and educational manuals. As a Licensed Mental Health Counselor in the State of New York, she has been a psychotherapist and spiritual counselor in private practice for over thirty years. Diane Berke and Andrew Harvey will be offering *Sacred Activism and the Journey to Resurrection: An Easter Retreat.* For more information visit onespiritinterfaith.org/easter-retreat/

Selfishness vs. Selflessness

ALBERT LEWIS

Much has been written about the polarity of selfishness vs. selflessness. Essentially the argument suggests a person who is too involved with himself lives life without significant concern for the other; and one who is too involved with the needs of others may underestimate his own needs and deny himself time, experiences or relationships that would be rewarding and growth enhancing. Like many others I wrestle with this polarity and am beginning to understand a middle ground which I am calling self-likeness; the ability to like one's self without being the center of the world or living on its margins. Questions a person who understands self-likeness asks are: "What do I need today to give me a sense of well-being and how can I then apply the benefit I have gained to others in my life? Am I able to look in the real mirror of life and say 'I like who I am?' Can I help others find their sense of self-likeness as I understand my own?"

Novelist and non-fiction writer Anne Lamott offers beautiful advice when she suggests: "Lighthouses don't go running all over an island looking for boats to save; they just stand there shining." I believe each of us is a lighthouse with a broader or narrower light. Each of us needs to be powered and aware of our own empowerment. When we are secure with the "inner light," its brightness will shine without our having to sound a fog alarm to announce it.

From a slightly different perspective, Vietnamese Buddhist teacher and author Thich Nhat Hanh has written: "To be beautiful means to be yourself. You don't need to be accepted by others. You need to accept yourself." When we accept ourselves with an honest awareness of our abilities and liabilities we have entered the realm of self-likeness and we are blessed with self-awareness and satisfaction (not to be confused with smugness

or conceit). Balance, harmony and a greater sense of purpose can emerge; and the selfishness-selflessness issues become a continuum, rather than extremes.

There is another perspective we might consider: The dictum 'to love your neighbor as you love yourself' can be understood as –"Before you can truly love your neighbor you need to have a healthy love of yourself!" If I am full of myself, there is no room for the world to enter. But if I am empty of myself I have no self with which to interact in the world. If I am honest with myself I am neither full nor empty.

Rabbi Hillel the Elder, living in the first century CE taught:

If I am not for myself, who will be for me?
If I am only for myself, who am I?
And, if not now—when?

The first two lines of Hillel's dictum are easy to understand. But the third—"if not now—when" challenges us to look closely at how we live, how we make decisions that impact ourselves and others—on a daily basis—and not to put life and caring, growth and staring into the future. We are challenged to know and accept ourselves today if tomorrow is to be anything more than twenty-four hours. One of the essential challenges of middle age and early old age is to know and embrace all that we are and how we, by our very being, can shape the future. SJ

Rabbi Albert Lewis is the author of *Soul Sounds: Reflections on Life* and a columnist for *The Grand Rapids Press.* He is Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Emmanuel in Grand Rapids, MI.

Love is most important and most powerful. But what is next in line?
Many people say faith. But I put hope above faith.
A person can live a long lifetime without faith,
but you do not go very long without hope.
Hope is a bridge to something greater.
Hope is a connection with many possibilities.

~Arthur Caliandro

In Tribute to Dr. Arthur Caliandro

(1933 - 2012)

In the fall of 1984, Arthur Caliandro succeeded Norman Vincent Peale as Senior Minister of Marble Collegiate Church, one of the oldest and most prominent Protestant congregations in North America.

During his twenty-five years of service at Marble Collegiate, he started many progressive initiatives. He founded an interfaith partnership with Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders, brought women to the church board and started a ministry to serve the LGBT community.

Dr. Caliandro's ability to listen intently to both the needs of the individual and the greater community was quickly apparent. In a short time he became known as "the people's minister."

Fellowship In Prayer had the honor to work with Dr. Caliandro when he joined our Board of Directors in 1991. He had a genuine understanding of our mission and tirelessly contributed his time and talents promoting its mission of multifaith understanding.

The world has lost a great visionary and leader, and to those who knew him, a wonderful colleague and friend.

The Silver Cross

SUSAN GREGG-SCHROEDER

I wandered the rutted back streets of a small town in Mexico to escape the visual overload of the rainbow-colored storefronts and the intrusive assault of street vendors. As I carefully walked the back roads to avoid the ruts and puddles, I was attracted to a small store with a door of peeling pink paint and the distinctive smell of fine leather. The cobbler, Mario, was hunched over his workbench as he mended and put together shoes for his neighbors. A lively conversation in Spanish drew me to the back of the shop where a low partition revealed a white-haired man creating silver jewelry. Mario and Carlos stopped their conversation only long enough to acknowledge my presence.

As they went back to their work, I noticed a cardboard box with several silver crosses. I was immediately drawn to a unique cross with cutouts. On closer inspection I saw that the vertical line of the cross contained a Star of David, the Buddhist Wheel of Life and the Islamic Crescent Moon and Star.

© Susan Gregg Schroder

I was moved by this intricate piece of art coming from a predominately Catholic country. Through a series of hand

gestures, Carlos and I came to a mutual agreement on the price and I left the small store with my "find."

I love this cross. But only those persons who get close enough notice the cutouts. This inevitably leads to questions and an ensuing discussion. When we get close enough to a person whom we perceive to be "different" in some way we become aware of what unites us as part of the human family. The barriers between "us" and "them" fall away. SJ

A frequent contributor to *Sacred Journey*, Rev. Susan Gregg-Schroeder founded Mental Health Ministries to provide educational resources on spirituality and mental illnesses. Visit www.MentalHealthMinistries.net.

Waiting for God in the Deep Midwinter

TERESA KNIPPER

Just last week I was watering my indoor plants and inspecting a late summer acquisition from the bargain rack of my local nursery. I cannot resist rescuing these orphans and trying my hand at coaxing them back to life. "This one's doing pretty well," I noted, spying a few new green leaves. "But what is this bump on the leaf?" I thought, and saw with closer inspection that it was a butterfly chrysalis. After scouring my resources, I discovered that it was the chrysalis of the Cabbage White, a rather mundane denizen of agricultural fields and also of my garden. It is even considered a pest since its caterpillar eats cabbage, broccoli and related crops.

The vision of this beautifully crafted space for incredible transformation intrigued me. How did it get here? Why on this plant? Why would the Creator take such exquisite care to make this small green case for what some would consider a pest? These questions lead me to wonder about the many ways that God makes waiting palpable, possible and even beautiful in the natural world. The bleak winter landscape seems devoid of life and color yet contains buds and possibility for all the new growth of spring. The intermediate stages of many insects can be appreciated for their own beauty just as I had wondered about my little green chrysalis once I noticed and named it.

It seems possible, at times, that our spiritual life can have the same quality of waiting and dormancy. There are periods of dryness, complacency or non-movement in our prayers and contemplations. We can use the lessons from the natural world to learn how to be in what can be the difficult liminal space of waiting. In the winter of my spiritual life can I slow down to notice all that possibility? What about noticing the possibility in my own heart? Winter spirituality is a time of patience and

being present with the possible and perhaps rejoicing in the "not yet": those parts of my deepest self that have not yet been brought to my awareness. My own spiritual practices in the dormant wintertime are quieter and more contemplative. They may include journaling, or making a midwinter retreat, or taking winter walks crunching over frozen paths or even walking a labyrinth of snow in my backyard. Many of these practices can engender a quiet and patient anticipation of what is next in store for our souls.

The dark dormancy of midwinter outside can give us a unique context to understand how to wait for those things in our lives that are not yet seen or perhaps even imagined. Waiting is particularly hard for us as high speed internet and data exchange happens at the speed of light. Is there any point to waiting? How can we wait?

Henri Nouwen gives us great insight into the nature and holiness of waiting in his work *The Spirituality of Waiting*. Nouwen invokes the stories of Zechariah, Mary, Elizabeth and Simeon and the Prophetess Anna from Scripture to enlighten us about the sanctity of waiting. These figures are all waiting for the coming of the Christ into the world. We may think that their vigils were passive, yet Nouwen tells us:

> . . . There is none of this passivity in Scripture. Those who are waiting are waiting very actively. They know that what they are waiting for is growing from the ground on which they are standing. That's the secret. The secret of waiting is the faith that the seed has been planted, that something has begun. Active waiting means to be present fully to the moment, in the conviction that something is happening. A waiting person is a patient person. The word "patience" means the willingness to stay where we are and live the situation out to the full in the belief that something hidden there will manifest itself to us. Impatient people are always expecting the real thing to happen

somewhere else and therefore want to go elsewhere. The moment is empty. But patient people dare to stay where they are. Active waiting means to be present fully to the moment; in the conviction that something is happening where you are and that you want to be present to it.

There is consequently none of this passivity in nature either. Although we think of a caterpillar as "sleeping" in its chrysalis, in actuality, incredible transformation is occurring. The essential cells and DNA are first breaking down and then being rearranged into a completely different creature. The insect goes from a creature that crawls on the earth or on the leaves of plants to a winged beauty that can take flight and astound the observer with its luminous colors. But to the casual observer this is not apparent.

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What then is the clue that both Nouwen and nature give us about waiting? We are to stay present in this moment even though it seems as if nothing is happening. We are to stay

actively engaged in what God is presenting to us and surrender to the quiet work of dormancy knowing that it is far from a waste of time. Simeon in Luke's Gospel knew this. The gospel writer says that, "He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him." Praying in the Temple daily, Simeon was ready for the Christ because he had been engaged in that holy and hopeful waiting. He was ready to recognize the Christ when he was presented to him.

As seekers we can cultivate the same kind of readiness that the prophet exhibited by being present to the quiet work of winter spirituality. In the winter when the soil is frozen and unworkable I draw inside to the garden of my heart to till. The journaling and retreats are the compost I add to the garden of my soul.

Just as I let my garden rest I realize that the dormancy is just as important as the growing and fertilizing. So it is in my spiritual winter that I can rest in the hope that God is working the soil of my inner soul. In the fallow fields, the earth gathers the nutrients to bring forth nourishment and beauty in the following spring. Can it be that what may seem as quiet waiting is actually preparation for what is yet to come?

I believe the Creator may have placed that chrysalis on my house plant to remind me that as I wait for the butterfly, I should not miss the beauty of the chrysalis-- the undone piece. Just as the Creator takes such exquisite care to craft a vessel for the common butterfly's transformation to its adult stage so God has created the indescribable beauty of the quiet winter landscape in order to facilitate our own deep metamorphosis. SJ

Teresa Knipper is a practicing Spiritual Director (certified by the Upper Room Spiritual Center in 2012) in her home parish of St. Paul's in Princeton, NJ. She also volunteers in the garden therapy and retreat programs at Cranaleith Spiritual Center in Philadelphia, PA. Teresa received her Bachelor of Arts from the University of Scranton and has also been trained as a Master Gardener in Mercer County by the Rutgers Cooperative Extension. Teresa is a lay associate of the Sisters of Mercy.

The Eternal She

SUE COPPERNOLL

Clothed in beauty, wreathed in love
Present in all of Creation
Her feet unshod and swift on the path.

Her eyes see beyond illusion
Into eternal canyons of sacred reality
Where her soul dwells in peace.

Her mouth murmurs prophecies,
Her words echo
Sacred melodies of the ages.

Hers is the voice of the Mother
Summoning us
To a feast of joy and delight.

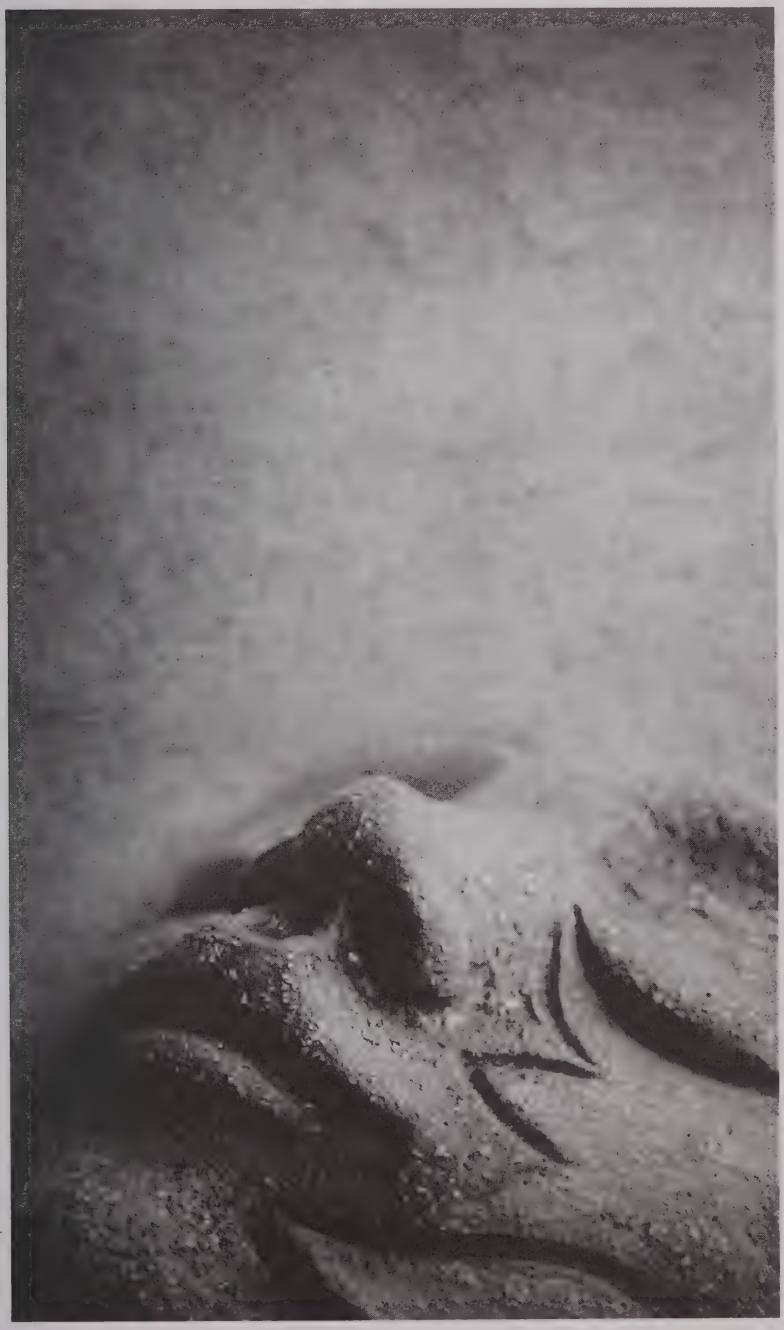
Her mind a vessel,
A receptacle for waves of knowing
The unknown and unknowable.

Her hands take up the tasks of the day
With courage and dispatch
For she is here, there, now here again.

Her arms reach to the stars in reverence,
Her cloak a mantle of compassion
Woven of radiant light.

Her breath our source and our longing
Our aspiration, our strength, our power,
Our renewal, and our rest.

Sue Coppernoll is a retired Pastoral Counselor who lives and writes in the Boston Mountains; the southernmost range of the Ozarks.



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True Nature

KARIN JERVERT

I am a mountain.
White clouds settle on the peaks of my joy.
A soft wind caresses the valleys of my sorrow.
The land stretches lifetimes into my past.
The sky reaches ever upward into the clear, empty truth.
The sun shines its compassionate light on me.
I am perfect and complete as are all things.

Karin Jervert's poetry is an exploration of modern spiritual experience. She is a new media artist and poet who resides in Lawrenceville, NJ.
www.poetryonthepath.tumblr.com

Bruised and Bloodied

LESLIE NEUSTADT

She hungers for solace—
the equator's sun,
a release of warm breezes,
lush sea air.
But it is white hues of winter,
the coldness of its rising sun
that beckon her.
She cradles her belly.
Prays, *Let love heal*
the violence
of my child's seeding.

Leslie Neustadt is a retired Assistant Attorney General for the State of New York. She has been published in *The Akros Review*, *Peer Glass*, *Cure Magazine* and elsewhere. She has also read her essays on public radio. Leslie writes and creates for healing, exploration and just plain fun from her home in Niskayuna, NY.

Saving the White Lions

LINDA TUCKER

Timbavati from the ancient Shangaan language means the place where the Starlions came down. It was in the wilds of Timbavati that my work with the White Lions began. The year was 1991 and Maria Khosa, a traditional medicine woman, rescued me from a pride of angry lions. This near-death experience changed my life. Known as the Lion Queen of Timbavati, Maria Khosa became my teacher, introducing me to the African elders who originally entrusted her with the ancient knowledge of Africa's most sacred animal totem. One of these sacred animals, a white lioness, born on Christmas Day 2000 in Bethlehem, South Africa, became my personal charge. Regarded as a sign of God's continued presence in Mother Nature, the lioness was named Marah by the pre-eminent African shaman, Credo Mutwa. Her name means "mother of the Sungod." Marah's parents originated from Timbavati, and though both were golden in colour, each also carried the White Lion recessive gene, unexpectedly producing a snow-white cub. Unfortunately, Bethlehem, South Africa, is the black heart of the canned hunting industry, a legalized malpractice whereby lions and other rare animals are removed from the wild and bred within enclosures to be used as high income-earning trophies. Marah was born in such a killing camp.

The African elders told me that ensuring the safety and freedom of the precious lioness, Marah and her lineage was to be my life-task. I was to begin by returning her to the land of her birthright, Timbavati. I first met Marah the day after her birth and have since dedicated every day to protecting this beautiful creature and the unique breed of snow-white lions to which she belongs. With the help of the Global White Lion Protection Trust, I secured Marah's freedom from the hunting

camp. However, she had to be housed in a zoo for a period of time, and this institution, in turn, became reluctant to release her because she was a prime specimen for breeding. Once again, I worked with my trusted team of advisors and fought for her freedom. Before guardianship was made definitive, Marah gave birth to her first litter of beautiful snow-white cubs. Our focus on freedom for Marah immediately expanded to include her three precious cubs. The ancestral elders named her offspring Regeus, Letaba and Zihra, meaning first ray of sunlight in three different African root languages. The Trust made certain Marah was allowed to raise her cubs on her own, without human handling or imprinting, a vitally important step to their future re-wilding.

Since the endemic birthplace of the White Lions is Timbavati, the Trust was committed to returning them there. Once we had secured freedom for Marah and her cubs, our next monumental task was the acquisition of the property in Timbavati identified by the African elders as the Sacred Heartland of the White Lions. With the support of like-minded people from all over the world, Marah and her three royal cubs became the first of the White Lions to set paws back in their Kingdom. A next generation of White Lions followed, successfully bonding with two wild golden lionesses, lovingly known in the region as the Golden Girls. With the introduction of two additional bloodlines, a third generation followed, and the White Lions of Marah's sacred lineage are now well on the way to recovery in the wild. As these lions once again walk their ancestral lands, the White Lion Trust has redirected its efforts to aiding and empowering the communities around them to become their custodians, honoring these living legends, the King of Kings!

INTERESTING FACTS

Linda Tucker and her partner, lion ecologist Jason A. Turner, have campaigned for many years to have the White Lions declared a national—indeed, a global—living heritage. At

present, these rare animals are not protected from eradication in the wild by any laws, regionally, nationally or internationally. Linda and Jason make their home in the Timbavati region, along with the three White Lion prides they have successfully re-wilded as part of a carefully monitored scientific reintroduction project.

Linda's book, *Mystery of the White Lions: Children of the Sun God*, published in 2001, chronicles her ten years of study with the African elders and provides a compelling first-hand account of her life with the White Lions, and reveals her overwhelming love for them.

In 2002, Linda founded the Global White Lion Protection Trust, a South African-based non-profit conservation and community development organization established to protect the White Lions from the trophy hunting industry and to preserve their endemic habitat as well as the indigenous knowledge that holds these animals sacred.

Among the Trust's accomplishments:

- In 2012, after seven years of genetic research, the scientific team cracked the genetic code, identifying the marker that makes the White Lion unique. Using this scientific evidence, the Trust can finally have the lions declared a "protected sub-species" under international law (CITES and IUCN Red Data Listing).
- Outreach programs were developed to address poverty alleviation in the low-income regions bordering the White Lions ancestral home with a goal of creating principled nature-loving people who will become stewards of the White Lion heritage, prohibiting poaching and hunting, and policing enforcement from within the community itself.
- In July, 2012, the White Lion Leadership Academy was launched as an educational programmatic CALL TO ACTION. Participants emerge equipped with the lion-hearted values and intuitive courage to act from the heart in their quest for the ethical enhancement of their own circumstances and of their environment. They are prepared to take heightened awareness and translate it into hard, fast, realistic and practical applications that make a difference, including hosting an annual fundraiser to support the White Lions' survival in their natural habitat. The learning modules themselves are based on the foundational material documented in Linda Tucker's work, *Mystery of the White Lions* and the enlightened leadership embodied by the White Lions themselves. The daily scientific tracking of the White Lion prides as they hunt or play in their natural and spiritual homeland form the bridge between the knowledge system and the lions themselves. SJ

For more information on the Global White Lion Protection Trust, or to visit the project, please see www.whitelions.org

In Sandy's Aftermath: A Love Letter to Men of Texas

VANESSA RUSH SOUTHERN

I love men from Texas. My dad is a Texan. My grandfather came to be a Texan. All my uncles are Texan. Some of the most important men in my life are Texan. They are strong, capable, kind, wise, funny, irreverent and reverent, dedicated and protective men. I rely on them. And they have not ever let me down.

I love my men from Texas, and I admit a prejudice toward their kind. So I find myself at the end of my driveway in suburban New Jersey. It is Day Nine since Sandy passed through, and all around us trees are down and roofs are cracked. Not so far away, houses were ripped apart and people drowned in their basements and cars.

For our part, my family only lost power. We had six trees down on our small lot, but the damage was nothing, given that my loved ones were safe and sound.

Still, on this particular morning, the storm had me down. I am a pastor of a sizable church and we had been focused on reaching our folks, making sure they were okay, finding them warm places to sleep. But when my feet hit the ice cold floor that day, and I had no breakfast worth eating for my kid, and I was standing at the end of my driveway surveying the damage, I hit my wall.

And then I saw them: two big, white service vehicles, one with a cherry-picker on its back, and two kindly drivers waving, and on the side of their trucks, spelled out in strips of black electrical tape, the word Texas.

Texas?! It struck me that the men and their trucks had come thousands of miles to be with us. It was 80 degrees last week in El Paso, my aunt said, and these men had left their own

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families and gorgeous weather to drive down our bleak streets. These men were working long days voluntarily, fingers cold and uncooperative, faithfully doing the work of restoring me and my New Jersey people to normalcy.

It changed my sense of what we faced.

It was Election Night when the men in Texas trucks started work on the rat's nest of wires that had been torn down at the top of our hill. They had to install eight new telephone poles and string them before we could get power. However, knowing a storm was blowing in, they worked all night. At 1 a.m., as Mitt Romney was conceding to Barack Obama, these men from Texas brought back lights and power to me and a couple hundred of my neighbors.

I love men from Texas. They do not disappoint. They showed what it means to love and serve one another. For any who were watching, they also showed how we can reach across distance and difference—and all talk of huge divides aside—what it means to be a nation.

So hail the great men of Texas. May the best in them catch fire in us all. SJ

Vanessa Rush Southern is the senior minister of the Unitarian Church in Summit, NJ. She is the author of *This Piece of Eden.*

Sell what you have, Give to the poor

KATE ROBERTSON

When I was just out of high school, my dad passed on suddenly, leaving my mom to raise eight children. To help support the family, I went to school part-time and worked several jobs.

One job was in a small, exclusive women's clothing store where I usually did accounting. But one Saturday, at the start of the winter coat season, they were short two people on the sales team. They asked me to fill in. It was the same day that they held a yearly contest to see which salesperson could sell the most coats.

I hadn't had a new winter coat in ages. I was thrilled to see the new lines from each design house—touch the soft and warm fabrics, really notice the colors and imagine wearing them. By the time the doors opened and customers streamed in, I had been sold on the beauty and value of each coat. It was easy, then, to sell them to others.

I imagined how each customer would look in a style perfect for her; a peacock blue coat on a redhead, a sassy swing coat on a tall mother of teens. I was so excited to share my love for these coats that by the end of the day I'd won the contest and was offered an amazing new position as a salesperson that more than doubled what I had contributed to my family.

Everyone has something of value they're sold on—so sell it and give to the poor. If you're sold on the value of gold, sell that, and give riches to those who need what gold buys. But if what you've got in your storehouse is compassion, kindness, tenderness, trust in God, faith in forgiveness . . . then be sold on that.

Let awareness of its value absolute exude from you, and give what you glean from the experience to the poor suffering heart. In this way, we're all capable of this radical act. We're all "haves" to someone else's "have not's." SJ

Through her writing and work with individuals, families and organizations around the world, Kate Robertson hopes to broaden the global availability of spiritual healing. www.thoughtgentlywhispers.com

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